

NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH
WARREN GRANT MAGNUSON CLINICAL CENTER
NURSING DEPARTMENT

Standards of Practice: Care of the Patient with Pericardial Pigtail Catheter

I. Assessment

- A. Assess the patient for the following complications q 4 hr:
 - 1. Distended neck veins
 - 2. Decreasing systolic blood pressure (<90 mm Hg or > 20 mm Hg lower than baseline)
 - 3. Narrowing pulse pressure (Normal range: 20 - 50 mm Hg)
 - 4. Muffled heart sounds
 - 5. Pulsus paradoxus
 - 6. Equalization of hemodynamic pressures
 - 7. Redness, swelling, or drainage from the catheter exit site

II. Interventions

- A. Flush pericardial catheters **per prescriber order** (3 ml 0.9% NaCl and 1 ml 100 units/ml of heparin flush q 8 hr and with each use **is the usual order**).
- B. Fluid may be aspirated from a pericardial catheter as needed per prescriber order. Pericardial fluid may be withdrawn at timed intervals or if the patient develops signs and symptoms of pericardial tamponade.

III. Documentation

- A. Document the assessment parameters listed above and the presence of complications in the MIS or Nursing Notes.
- B. Document the administration of heparin flush and the amount of fluid aspirated by the physician in MIS or the Critical Care Flow Sheet.

IV. REFERENCES:

1. Hamel, W. (1998). Care of Patients with an indwelling pericardial catheter". Critical Care Nurse. Vol 18(5). 40-45.
2. Lynn-McHale, D. and Carlson, K. (2001). AACN Procedure Manual for Critical Care Nurses, Philadelphia: W.B. Saunders.

EDUCATIONAL MATERIAL:

1. 10D Adult/Pediatric Intensive Care Unit Emergency Response Program
2. Critical Care, Heart, Lung, Blood, and Neurology Nursing Service Code Team Program

Approved by:

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Developed: 4/95
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